

CAREER FOCUS

Do terms of address really matter?

BY MASTER SGT. DAVID HALVORSON
TEAM KIRTLAND career assistance advisor

There’s been a lot of reference to the term of address for senior master sergeants as “senior,” much like the term “chief” which is used for chief master sergeants. Is this the new norm? Is this appropriate or acceptable?

Generally speaking, policy for rank and precedence stems from time-honored military customs and traditions, which ensure proper respect for the chain of command and build the foundation of self-discipline. Regarding your question, proper terms of address are in fact clearly outlined in Attachment 2, Air Force Instruction 36-2618, *The Enlisted Force Structure* – the official term of address is “senior master sergeant” or “sergeant.”

Still, some will argue that their use of the term ‘senior’ is always with respect and deference, and therefore they ask, “What’s the big deal?” Fair question.

In a recent conversation with Chief Master Sgt. Steve Sargent, Kirtland NCO Academy commandant (soon to be Air Force Basic Military Training superintendent, Lackland AFB, Texas), I asked for his thoughts on the subject, and here’s what he had to say.

“As far as terms of address are concerned, I’m old school and by the book. Our enlisted corps is *defined* by military tradition and the long-established customs and courtesies we inherited from those who came before us. Our titles are hard earned, and when we dilute (terms of address) we do the Air Force, and its personnel a disservice.

“When we deliberately deviate from the policies and directives that govern

(our Air Force), we take away from what we have worked hard to become.”

Wow! Powerful words that made me sit a little straighter in my chair. But I didn’t stop there. In my pursuit of the big picture, I talked to countless additional members of our enlisted corps to get a solid read on this unique ‘trend’ and almost all were aligned with Chief Sargent’s thinking. Almost all! A few surprised me when they defended their use of the term saying, “it’s a term of respect,” and, “the U.S. Navy has been doing it for years.”

Of course, practicing something doesn’t make it proper, but I wanted to get the story straight, so I called on the Navy and spoke with Master Chief Petty Officer (retired) G. H. Halvorson—yes, dear old dad. He’s as no-nonsense and by-the-book as they come, and with 26 years of distinguished service to our country, he served it to me straight!

First off, the use of the word “rank” for Navy enlisted personnel is incorrect. The Navy doesn’t have “rank”—they have “rates,” which is a combination of a person’s rating (job) *and* their pay grade. While this can make a discussion about Navy terms of address confusing, there are—fortunately—accepted designations for all Navy enlisted personnel, published by the Naval Education and Training Professional Development and Technology Center. According to Chapter 9 of the Basic Military Requirements Training Manual, which provides all Naval recruits with accepted standards for Naval personnel, “petty officers in pay grades E-7, E-8 and E-9 are to be introduced and addressed as ‘chief,’ prefixed by ‘senior’ (E-8) or ‘master,’ (E-9) as appropriate.”

Okay, so another myth busted—you’ve



Master Sgt. David Halvorson

got to love the facts!

Finally, a few seasoned enlisted personnel confided that they had heard (and used) the term since the early eighties (and beyond), and in their respective fields it was fairly common. They acknowledged that it wasn’t in accordance with policy and instruction, but asserted, “that’s how it’s always been done!” I didn’t use that defense in debate class and, personally, I wouldn’t rely on it now! It doesn’t pass the logic test.

So here’s a question for you. The next time you cross paths with a senior master sergeant, how are you going to address him or her? By first name? As “senior”? Or simply, “Hey, dude”? Where do we draw the line? Would you address an E-7 as “Master Clark”, or an E-6 as “Tech Jones”? I know it doesn’t work for me!

Why not strengthen the heritage of the enlisted corps by promoting proper policy and protocol—in everything you do! Our actions have a powerful influence on those around us, both up and down the chain. If we don’t adhere to the basics, such as those involving proper respect and courtesy, how then can we expect to properly lead our Airmen in our chosen profession, the profession of arms?



Col. Henry L. Andrews, Jr.
377th Air Base Wing
commander

Maj. Michael Kleiman
377th Air Base Wing
Public Affairs director

Terry E. Walker
Editor

Jennifer E. West
Staff writer, 846-4235

Senior Airman Erin L. Smith
Sports, Services and Of
Note editor, 846-4236

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at www.kirtland.af.mil

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to 377ABW.NUCLEUS
@kirtland.af.mil

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Advertising and Production
Robert Lambert
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Command Chief’s Choice



Senior Master Sgt. Brent P. Belcoff

is a Security Forces Operations Superintendent. He manages all security and law enforcement operations for 480 assigned Air Force active duty and reserve and Army National Guardsmen. Sergeant Belcoff oversees antiterrorism/force protection, law enforcement, plans and programs, Kirtland Underground Munitions, Maintenance and Storage Complex, sensors, police services, confinement, resource protection, investigations, military working dog kennels and pass and registration. **What do you like best about this assignment?** Everyday is a rewarding challenge.

What is the most memorable event in your Air Force career?

The day I received orders for my fourth back-to-back remote tour.

What are your hobbies?

Skydiving, mountain biking and working on my rock crawler.

What person do you consider a great influence in your life?

Of course, my wife.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force

What aspect of your life do you consider most important?

My family.

What is your main goal in life?

To become wealthy and spend more time with my family.

FORUM

kirtlandcc.forum@kirtland.af.mil, 846-4240

Why can't I use the South Gate all day?

My concern is that the South Gate is open right now for large truck traffic that is hauling dirt into the base.

I live in the south, as many people who work on the base do. During non-duty hours the gate is open for large trucks, but they are not letting people with their private vehicles come through it. This makes no sense to me if there are already security personnel there.

I've already called the Law Enforcement Desk and they referred me to a sergeant. He told me it was for safety concerns. Well, we drive with those large trucks up and down the back roads across this base all day long. So, I don't see where it is a safety issue.

I was just wondering why people with their private vehicles couldn't drive through there?

The South Valley Gate is open 6-8:30 a.m. and 3:30-5:30 p.m., weekdays, for everyone who meets Kirtland AFB entry control requirements. Between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., access on and off the installation through the South Valley Gate is reserved for contractors that have pre-coordinated their arrival and departure times through the Security Forces Police Services Section.

We allow contractors to use the South Valley Gate to mitigate the number of large trucks transiting the more congested portions of the base, thus improving traffic safety.

Fitness machine works perfectly

The staff at the East Fitness Center appear to be incapable of solving a simple problem with the Hammer Strength leg press machine. It seems to take an act of God to create a removable pin. There is a design flaw that limits range of motion.



COL. HENRY L. ANDREWS, JR.
377th Air Base Wing commander

We contacted the manufacturer of the exercise equipment and the staff there verified there are no design defects related to the Hammer Strength leg press. In fact, the leg press machine we have is designed to maximize safety and performance for all who use it.

We hope you continue to enjoy the first-class fitness equipment offered at the East and West fitness centers.

New Bicentennial Park great!

I just drove by the renovated Bicentennial Park. I wanted to tell you how impressed I am. I am glad that it is there for the children. It looks really great. Keep up the good work. Thank you.

We're pretty excited about the all-new Bicentennial Park too. Lots of planning, volunteer site preparation and great contractor support helped stretch our investment and bring this project to fruition. It is just super to drive by and see so many enjoying it. This "quality of life" initiative is just one more way we're trying to make Kirtland AFB a great place to live, work and play.

Doctor is superb

I am calling about Dr. (Capt. Brian N.) Palen, to let you know that he is an excellent doctor in Internal Medicine. I've been going to him now for about a year and his bedside manner is just superb. I think if anyone deserves a promotion, this doctor should get it.

You know, I have been to many doctors on the base before, but Dr. Palen is the best. I think that he needs to be recognized.

Thank you for the call. Capt., Dr., Brian N. Palen is one of the 377th Medical Group's many professional providers. We are very proud of the outstanding care he and the rest of our team provide.

The Medical Group strives everyday to provide the best patient care that they can to beneficiaries. The staff does wonderful things for our patients all the time and it is always nice to get feedback on how they are doing. The Medical Group's battle cry, "Med Group Takes Care of the Troops," applies to all who walk through our doors.

Always on display

I wanted to comment on some concerns about how a person's behind the wheel behavior might reflect badly on the Air Force.

I was leaving the base the other day and approaching the Eubank Gate on F Street and I was being tale-gated by a young man obviously in a hurry. When he got to the two-lane part of the street near Sandia Laboratories, he passed a string of three cars and barely managed to get back past them when it turned to one lane.

Once he got off base he continued on driving aggressively and when he got to a stop light off base, he decided to cut through a parking lot to avoid waiting and he tried to be cute and make it look like he was parking for a minute.

I happened to notice that based on the sticker I could tell it was an officer. I think anybody in uniform

should be aware that their driving reflects on the Air Force, but even more so an officer because they should be exemplifying good behavior.

You make a great point. Air Force people—officers, enlisted, civilians, contractors—are always "on display." Even in civilian clothes, we have "signs" that tell others quite clearly who we are and what institution we represent.

The "image" we project has great meaning to the vast majority of citizens who view our Armed Forces as a virtuous part of our society and—perhaps more important—to those who would seek to do us harm.

Our infrequent undisciplined displays encourage others to believe mistakenly that Americans are weak. Fortunately, most TEAM KIRTLAND members know exactly how to conduct themselves. We are grateful for their example.

Forum

We want your suggestions and comments concerning Kirtland AFB.

However, may we also suggest giving base agencies or the chain of command the chance to resolve your concern before calling Forum.

If you decide the Forum is the right answer, we don't print callers' names.

Customer service

Chapel, 846-5691

CE Help Desk, 846-8222

Commissary, 846-9586

Computer help, 846-5926

Energy wasting, 846-4633

Exchange Service, 266-9887

Family Services, 846-0741

Finance, 846-8045, 846-6639

Law Enforcement, 846-7926

Legal Services, 846-4217

Medical Clinic, 846-3406

Services Squadron, 846-1828

Write:

377 ABW/CC Forum

2000 Wyoming SE

Kirtland AFB, NM 87117